

" Yea, all which it inherit shall *dissolve*,  
 " And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 " Leave not a rack behind."—SHAKESPEARE.

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TO THE  
 FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS  
 OF THE  
 CITY AND LIBERTIES OF WESTMINSTER.  
 LETTER XII.

GENTLEMEN,

At the close of the last letter which I had the honour to address to you, I stated, at page 533, that want of time prevented me from examining in detail a paper, upon the subject of *dissolving parliaments*, published by that notorious place-hunter, Mr. Perry of the Morning Chronicle. And here, Gentlemen, before we enter upon this always important, and now interesting subject, let us just cast a glance over the state of the *press*. This press, which has been called the Palladium of free men, and which, in plain English, might have been called the Guardian of free men; this press of which so much has been said and so much has been sung, has, like many other things in our political state, been so completely perverted, as to be one of the chief means, by which freedom, real and necessary freedom, the freedom which an honest and loyal man ought to enjoy, has been nearly extinguished amongst us. As to the operation of the *law* upon this press; as to the powers which the maxims and precedents established by different Judges have given to the Attorney-General, that is to say, to the ministry of the day, relative to publications in print; as to the severe penalties, enacted, under the administration of Pitt, against those who should, in print, animadvert upon the characters or conduct of ministers, let those characters and that conduct be what they might; which enactments Lord Howick, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Whitbread and all the Fox party, represented as justifying *open resistance* on the part of the people; and which enactments, observe, they have suffered to remain, not only without an effort to remove them, but without seeming to remember that they were in existence, while, at the same time, they daily insulted the nation with praises of

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the man by whom they were invented and caused to be adopted: It is not to these trammels, in which the press is held, these perils which surround every man who ventures to write and publish truth, that I am, at present, solicitous to draw your attention; but, to the corruption and baseness of the press itself, and the way in which it has been rendered an enemy to real freedom. Of this we have an instance sufficiently striking in the Morning Chronicle alone. For twenty years that paper, the property of the very same person who now owns it, was the eulogist and champion of the party of Mr. Fox. When Mr. Fox and his party came into power, that proprietor, Mr. Perry, had a place given him; and thus for his party-labours was he remunerated at our expence. The True Briton and Sun newspapers were set up with the public money; and, when Mr. Heriot, the person who conducted them for so many years, and whose sole and settled business was to eulogize Pitt and his minions, retired from the business, he had five or six hundred pounds a year of the public money settled upon him for life, in what is called a double-commissionership of the Lottery, which salary, *if at all necessary*, should have gone to reward some man, who had rendered undoubted services to the country. Mr. Walter, the proprietor of the Times news-paper, did receive for many years, if he does not still receive, a pension of six hundred pounds a year from the public purse in consequence of his devoting his paper to the minister Pitt. The Anti-Jacobin weekly news-paper, in which those famous "young friends," Messrs. Canning and Frere wrote, was set up at the public expence; and Mr. William Gifford, whom they employed to assist them and to edit the paper, had, first, a patent place of a hundred a year bestowed upon him; next he was made a double commissioner of the Lottery, and, since, in addition, pay-master of the Gentlemen-Pensioners, making in all about a thousand a year for life at our expence; and, never in his whole life time, though he is a very modest, and, I believe, a very worthy man,



has he ever rendered any service to the country. I will pass over the particulars relating to the "Pilot" and the "Royal Standard," weekly papers set up by the Addington administration to oppose my Register; but, I cannot help pointing out to you the nature of the influence arising from advertisements in *all* the papers. This is the great source of emolument; and this source flows from all the public offices as well as from Lloyd's and all its numerous connections according to the *politics* of the paper through which it runs. Some papers, the Morning Post in particular, are the property of companies of traders or speculators. The thing is regarded merely as a money speculation, is to be made the most of, and, of course, the most profitable politics will be always preferred. In all the daily papers, paragraphs from individuals, or bodies of men, are inserted for payment, no matter what they contain, so that the proprietor be not exposed to the lash of the law. The price is enormous, not less than half-a-guinea an inch; of course, the rich villain has the whole of the daily press for his defender or apologist, while the oppressed or slandered man, if he be poor, has no means whatever of appealing to the justice of the public. You and the whole nation will agree with me, that, after all the dark hints that had been thrown out about the conduct of Col. Cochrane Johnstone, previous to, and during, his trial, the decision of the court-martial was a matter of general interest; yet I have been assured, that that deeply injured gentleman was unable to obtain the publication even of so brief a thing as the mere decision without paying, to the different daily papers, fifty or sixty guineas; while we see that paragraphs, and long ones too, in defence of Davison and Delancy, have appeared in all the daily papers in London. Add to this, the power which the Stamp-office has; add also the influence which the numerous sets of commissioners, surveyors, inspectors, &c. &c. have over the provincial papers, in which also the innumerable government advertisements are inserted, or not, as the papers may behave, and then wonder, if you can, at the torpor of the people, and say, if you can, that this press is "the Guardian of free men?" As to the Magazines and Reviews, the far greater part of them are in exactly the same state. The proprietor of the Gentleman's Magazine, Mr. Nichols, has great profits as a printer to the government. The British Critic, Review, is conducted by two clergymen, Messrs. Nares and Beloe; the former is an archdeacon, had besides one

living given him long ago, and has recently had bestowed upon him another large living by Lord Chancellor Eldon. Mr. Beloe has a living in the city of London, is a prebendary of Lincoln, and has lately been appointed to a place in the British Museum, in which his worthy colleague had a place before him; and, observe, that, by an act of parliament, passed in the year 1803, these two holders of living upon living, are, under pretence of their offices in the Museum, excused from residing on any of their livings, and, of course, from all clerical duties whatsoever. Mr. Beloe is, indeed, now no longer in the Museum; but, that the public are not acquainted with *the cause of his dismissal* is another proof of the corrupted state and base partiality of the press.

—The Anti Jacobin Review was begun by a person, who, for cogent reasons, no doubt, has, of late years, changed his name, by patent, from *Green* to that of *Gifford*, and who is now a police-magistrate, at a salary of five hundred pounds a year. This Review is now in the hands of the famous John Bowles, whom some persons humourously call the Reverend John Bowles, the intimate friend and associate and co-operator of Redhead Yorke. This John Bowles began his career of greatness by writing a pamphlet against Paine; that pamphlet, which did not preclude the necessity of a proclamation against Paine's works, procured Bowles a Commissionership of Bankrupts. He was the agent in setting up the Anti Jacobin Newspaper; that procured him a Commissionership in the management of Dutch Property, sequestrated at the beginning of *last* war, and which office, an office that yields, probably, a thousand or two a year, is suffered to continue until this day. Mr. Bowles was, as the saying is, *brought up to the bar*; but he has found the press, the "*Palladium of free men*," a much more profitable concern.—Pamphlets, and even large books, upon whatever subject, owe, in a great degree, their doctrines, if at all connected with politics, to the same all-influencing cause. Money, the *public* money; to share in the immense sums raised upon the people; in some way or other to effect this purpose is the object of ninety-nine out of every hundred persons who write and who publish their writings, and which object is, and must ever be, in direct and necessary hostility to the interests of the people at large. If therefore there ever was in the world a thing completely perverted from its original design and tendency, it is the press of England; which, instead of enlightening, does, as far as it has any power, keep

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the people in ignorance; which, instead of cherishing notions of liberty, tends to the making of the people slaves; and which, instead of being their guardian, is the most efficient instrument in the hands of all those who oppress, or who wish to oppress, them. An abusive pedagogue has lately told me, that, like all other rash and ignorant reformers, I am unable to distinguish the *abuse* of the press from the press itself; but, Gentlemen, when a thing becomes *wholly* abused; when it is totally perverted; when a *cordial*, no matter by what means, becomes *poison*, are we not then to represent it as an evil? But, the question is, should we be better off without any press at all? To which I answer in the affirmative; because, the public mind being then not misled by falsehood, being left to its own natural conclusions, its judgments would be founded upon events; every man would form his opinion according to what he saw and what he felt; and though oppressors would proceed unaccused, the oppression would not be of long duration. It is by the semblance of freedom that men are most effectually enslaved. Would you rivet their chains never again to be loosened; would you stifle the voice of compassion towards the injured and oppressed; would you provide complete impunity to the oppressor, shelter him from reproach and even from silent execration? your means are, the *names* and *forms* of freedom and justice. So, likewise, if you would suppress the promulgation of truth; if you would propagate falsehood; if you would engender and perpetuate ignorance; if you would rob of its utility experience, which is said to make fools wise; if you would prevent the natural effect of observation and of feeling, the most, and, indeed, the only effectual means, is a shackled and corrupted press; and that such is the press of England no honest man will attempt to deny.—But, you will ask me, where is the *remedy*? or, are we then to lie down in despair, regard ourselves and our children as slaves, and, of course, view the fate of our country with perfect indifference? No: none of these. The remedy for this evil, and for all the other political evils that oppress us, is very simple, and undeniably constitutional; but, of it I must reserve what I have to say, until I have submitted to you some observations upon the abovementioned paper of Mr. Perry.

The paper, to which I refer, appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 30th of last month; and, I must beg your perusal of the *whole* of it; because, as you will find, it leads to the discussion of many points, each of which is ten million times

more interesting to you and I and to our children, than is the fate of Prussia, or of Russia, or of all the kingdoms and states of continental Europe put together. — “ The symptoms of decided disapprobation with which the new Ministers have already been received by the House of Commons, and the sentiments which many leading individuals and connections are known to entertain respecting their conduct, have convinced them that they cannot expect the confidence and support of that Body. — Indeed the dangerous and unconstitutional principles which they have virtually recognized, has excited just alarm. The late Ministers, who had absolutely and completely given up the Catholic Bill, and in doing so had given a proof of deference to his Majesty’s feelings as strong as could be afforded, one necessarily carrying with it a security as valid as could be given that they would not wantonly urge the subject, were required to sign a written pledge not to advise or propose any thing relative to a great public question, involving the interest of a third part of the Empire, and the preservation of the state.— If they had subscribed such a paper they would have created a document that might have been the ground of impeachment. It would have been an abdication of their trust, a dispensation with their official oaths, and an exchange of their character as faithful advisers, for that of abject tools of the crown. It would have been wholly repugnant to the principles of this government, and tending to establish in the Crown a responsibility for every thing culpable, either of omission or commission in public affairs, that might be of the most dangerous consequences both to the welfare and the tranquillity of the nation.— The new Ministers have not, they say, subscribed any pledge; but can they deny that virtually they have agreed to observe that silence and reserve by which perhaps the greatest calamities may be entailed upon this country? the present Ministers have virtually discarded wisdom and counsel from their system, with respect to one part of the King’s affairs, and it may be doubted whether they have left themselves liberty to apprise him of what misfortune may teach, or to whisper those counsels which necessity may prescribe.— In this situation, abandoned by all those who have a real permanent interest in the state, the new Ministry affect to talk of what they call an appeal to the country by a dissolution of Parliament.— This proposition certainly was



“ suggested, and is earnestly recommended  
 “ by a certain class in the country, *whom it*  
 “ *would be improper to call by any antiqua-*  
 “ *ted nickname*, but who, it may be presu-  
 “ med, have views very different indeed from  
 “ those who would advise the dissolution of  
 “ the Parliament. *That class wish to see a*  
 “ *Westminster election, and a Middlesex elec-*  
 “ *tion; telling us that a new election would be*  
 “ *a great good. An unmixed good, a good*  
 “ *undisputable. A good that will make*  
 “ *up for many an evil.*” The motive of  
 “ those who wish to see a Westminster and  
 “ a Middlesex election, for these objects are  
 “ doubtless very deserving of encouragement  
 “ from the Court! That class to whom we  
 “ allude are wise in their generation.  
 “ THEY think that THEY MUST GAIN.  
 “ But what will the GENTLEMEN, the  
 “ noblemen of England, nay, the PRIN-  
 “ CES, who are supposed to be in their coun-  
 “ sels (though we have from motives of de-  
 “ licacy considered our information as to the  
 “ proceeding of these unfounded); can they  
 “ consider a dissolution of Parliament four  
 “ months after its meeting a thing to be hail-  
 “ ed with joy, for the same reason that the  
 “ agitators of Westminster and Middlesex  
 “ sigh for it? Surely, those who look to  
 “ such a thing must be blind indeed, if  
 “ they do not see that they are the dupes  
 “ of their bitterest enemies. — But in  
 “ dissolving parliament these gentlemen  
 “ say they appeal to the country! Do  
 “ they mean to say that they would gain a  
 “ single vote by appealing to the gentlemen  
 “ of England, to the counties, or popular  
 “ boroughs? They know they could not.  
 “ What then? Do they mean to say that  
 “ they would gain their object by a traffic  
 “ in the corrupt boroughs? And would  
 “ they call that an appeal to the people,  
 “ supposing it could succeed? They ought,  
 “ however, to beware of these experi-  
 “ ments. Every body knows what they  
 “ mean, but they would not succeed. Let  
 “ them be assured, however, that they  
 “ will not be suffered to call this an appeal  
 “ to the people, for the falsehood of the pre-  
 “ tence shall be exposed. — The parlia-  
 “ ment would be dissolved if the House of  
 “ Commons did not think proper to transfer  
 “ their confidence from those who, accord-  
 “ ing to Mr. Dickenson, possessed its confi-  
 “ dence, and from whom it ought not to  
 “ be withdrawn, unless they were guilty  
 “ of something which would justify its be-  
 “ ing withdrawn. — What a situation  
 “ then is this, that a ministry is removed by  
 “ a positive interference of the King’s pre-  
 “ rogative, without any fault whatever al-

“ ledged against them; nay, because they  
 “ would not enter into a most unconstitu-  
 “ tional pledge with respect to their future  
 “ conduct? — Suppose, what will un-  
 “ questionably be the case, that the House  
 “ of Commons adheres to those ministers  
 “ who possessed their confidence, and who  
 “ have done nothing to forfeit it, and  
 “ therefore refuse their confidence to those  
 “ adventurers, without talent, property,  
 “ connexion, or permanent interest in the  
 “ state; that are by the most ridiculous of  
 “ all intrigues advanced to office, is the  
 “ parliament to be dissolved? The Duke  
 “ of Portland at least, should remember  
 “ what Mr. Burke, in his proposed address  
 “ said upon an occasion, which, deep as  
 “ his Grace has since drank of the oblivious  
 “ stream, he cannot yet have forgotten. —  
 “ “ It is the undoubted prerogative of the  
 “ “ crown to dissolve parliament; but we  
 “ “ beg leave to lay before his Majesty, that  
 “ “ it is, of all the trusts vested in his Ma-  
 “ “ jesty, the most critical and delicate, and  
 “ “ that in which this House has the most  
 “ “ reason to require not only the good  
 “ “ faith, but the favour of the crown.”  
 “ — Again, “ An House of Commons  
 “ “ respected by his ministers is essential to  
 “ “ his Majesty’s service. It is fit that they  
 “ “ should yield to parliament, and not  
 “ “ that parliament should be new mo-  
 “ “ delled until it is fitted to their purposes.”  
 “ — In what situation then do we stand?  
 “ The present parliament has now sat little  
 “ more than four months; and is it to be  
 “ dissolved merely that it may be “ fitted  
 “ “ to the purposes” of those desperate ad-  
 “ venturers, without property or considera-  
 “ tion, avowedly seeking to be the pensioners  
 “ of the public for bread before they com-  
 “ mence their ministerial functions? Shall  
 “ they dare to dissolve the parliament in or-  
 “ der to fit it to their purposes? What say  
 “ the people of England to such policy?  
 “ — Since the Septennial Act was passed  
 “ nothing of this sort has ever been at-  
 “ tempted. It has been considered the  
 “ leading difference between this and the  
 “ arbitrary governments of the Continent,  
 “ that our King was obliged to listen to the  
 “ advice of his unfettered counsellors, but  
 “ to defer to the wisdom of his great court  
 “ of parliament. The prerogative of dis-  
 “ solution never was vested in the crown to  
 “ enable the King to get rid of an honest  
 “ and virtuous set of counsellors, but to  
 “ protect him against a supposed exube-  
 “ rance of republicanism and independence,  
 “ which might threaten the royal authority.  
 “ Is that the vice or the excess of parlia-



ments now?—No, no. Parliaments are not apt to commit such offences. The right of dissolving parliament was intended to protect the monarchical branch of the constitution—not to indulge the personal caprices of the monarch.—But in all that time have we ever seen parliament dissolved for displaying their confidence in ministers who had committed no crime, and for distrusting new ministers, who had by their abdication on the death of Mr. Pitt, publicly proclaimed their own incapacity? Never can that memorable retreat be forgotten; and though Lord Mulgrave ventures to take the Admiralty, Mr. Canning the Foreign Affairs, Lord Hawkesbury the Home Department, Sir James Pulteney and Lord Castlereagh the War Department and Ireland, with Mr. Perceval and the Duke of Portland at the Treasury, every one must see that they are the very same people still, and that, as is natural, cowardice is changed for the moment from panic to presumption.—The only instance that can be quoted, is that of 1784, but we deny the precedent. The parliament of 1783, which Mr. Pitt dissolved, was in the middle of its fourth Session. Is there nothing of degree in these matters? Is there no difference between dissolving a Parliament, after four years and after four months?—But the case of Mr. Pitt's dissolution is every way unlike; and if it were, what Mr. Pitt did in the consciousness of his great genius, and supported, perhaps in some degree, by a misguided zeal of the people, in favour of his wonderful maturity, and promises of talents, can afford no precedent for the despicable drivellers to whom the great offices of state have fallen, in the present chance-medley distribution.—But it is pretended too, that the late ministers dissolved Parliament for party purposes, which forms a precedent. This is false two ways. It is false in point of fact, and in point of inference.—The late ministry dissolved a parliament that had sat four complete sessions—a thing surely very different from dissolving a parliament that has not sat four months.—But they did not dissolve that parliament from any doubt of its supporting them. They had come into power, and had produced various most important measures, some new, and exposed to a most furious, malignant, and factious opposition on the part of certain members of that parliament, but carried by very large and decisive majorities. They never were in the slightest degree

pressed, far less compelled, to dissolve for support.—They dissolved at the end of four sessions complete, and *they dissolved at the time when, by the failure of the negotiation, a new æra in the war had begun.*—This is proved by the testimony, or the reproach, of the present ministers, that the failure of the negotiation determined the late ministers to call a new, instead of assembling the old parliament; and it was even matter of bitter, though unjust censure, that the determination to dissolve was taken in this manner. But the dissolving in that manner was founded upon the great event which then happened. It gave the people the opportunity of chusing a new house of commons coolly, at a most important crisis, in which party spirit did not mingle. It was an æra too, which, if the representations of the present ministers were well founded, was very unfortunately chosen, if the conduct of the negotiation was so foolish and contemptible as they chose to describe it.—But whether the moment, on account of popular impression, was well or ill chosen, at least it was not chosen with a view to any pitiful clamour artfully excited; it was not with a view to a parliamentary support indispensable to them; it was not with a view to a momentary existence, but *the public had the opportunity of choosing their representatives, as coolly, as fairly, as impartially as ever was known since the origin of parliaments.*—Now what would be the case were parliament at present dissolved?—1. It would be a bold exercise of the royal prerogative for an immediate purpose; and in order to get rid of a parliament which continued to confide in a ministry against whom no fault whatever could be alledged. 2. It would be an act justified by no precedent; inasmuch as no parliament was ever dissolved in this country, since the accession of the House of Hanover, so soon after its being convoked, particularly for ministerial purposes.—Such being the case, we may fairly inquire what pretence could be alledged for a measure which in its principle tends to the degradation of parliament, by avowing the object to be one that will be favourable to the creatures of the court. Dare the present men pretend—do they pretend, to have the country with them? They know it is not so. *All they can hope then is by a corrupt exercise of Government influence to obtain a majority in Parliament, without the least consideration of their public merits or principles—or rather in defiance*



“ of their self-convicted imbecility, and their  
 “ flagrant subserviency.—Are they aware  
 “ too of the agitation of men’s minds that  
 “ must take place in Ireland, if a General  
 “ Election take place?—Is it possible that  
 “ the feelings of men naturally warmed du-  
 “ ring the quietest election, should not be  
 “ enflamed by one that brought home to  
 “ their bosoms questions in which they were  
 “ so peculiarly interested? Would it be pos-  
 “ sible to make the people of Ireland for-  
 “ get, that in the circumstances which led  
 “ to the dissolution, there were things most  
 “ dear, most important to them?—Could  
 “ they enter upon election contests without  
 “ feelings strongly excited? Hitherto the  
 “ ill-used people of Ireland have been be-  
 “ guiled by soft words, and soothed with  
 “ hope. Amidst all the evils of their des-  
 “ tiny, hope at least has been kept at the  
 “ bottom of the chest. But now these rob-  
 “ bers and pilferers of the plan, who have  
 “ stolen into power, have let even that  
 “ escape. The people of Ireland see a mi-  
 “ nistry hostile to them from principle. Is  
 “ that a time then to inflame the natural  
 “ unavoidable feelings of four millions of  
 “ our fellow subjects by the collision and  
 “ heat of a general election? Those who  
 “ love a Westminster and Middlesex Elec-  
 “ tion could tell the new ministers why they  
 “ love it. It is on account of the turbu-  
 “ lence, the jubilee suspension of authority;  
 “ the immoderate licence of debate which  
 “ accompany that event. And would not  
 “ all this happen in Ireland? Would it not  
 “ give rise to the most violent exaltation of  
 “ men’s minds, and perhaps prepare them  
 “ for corresponding acts?—Let those who  
 “ advise the King to dissolve his parliament,  
 “ look to these things. It is not enough  
 “ that they are prepared by martial law and  
 “ military force to subdue discontent. Is  
 “ the nation willing, or is it able, to spare  
 “ its troops either to watch or subdue dis-  
 “ turbances wantonly excited? This is not  
 “ a moment for a diversion of our force.  
 “ Buonaparté indeed will hear of these  
 “ things with pleasure.

“ Audiet, cives acuisse ferrum

“ Quo graves Persæ melius perirent.

“ No friend to England, however, no  
 “ friend to Europe, can hear of such propo-  
 “ sals without horror. They must lead to  
 “ a total diversion of all our energies from  
 “ the common cause, if they do not excite  
 “ the rebellion which the national force will  
 “ be called upon to suppress.—Let the  
 “ noblemen and gentlemen of England and  
 “ Ireland, who have an interest in the coun-  
 “ try beyond that which a thousand such

“ fugitive ministers as the present have in  
 “ possession or prospect, think to what  
 “ such desperate counsels must lead; and  
 “ let them join in preventing the mis-  
 “ chief while yet it can be prevented.”—

The great purpose of this paper is, as you  
 will not fail to perceive, Gentlemen, to deter  
 the king from dissolving the parliament;  
 and, as the writer presumes, that the present  
 members of the House of Commons will  
 continue to vote on the side of the late, or  
 turned-out ministers, he expects, as a  
 consequence, that the present ministers will  
 be unable to carry any measure in parlia-  
 ment, and, of course, that their rivals will  
 regain the places, from which they have  
 been ousted, not forgetting the attendant  
 circumstance, that he himself would re-pos-  
 sess his place and his profits, which I am  
 fully persuaded he would have gladly held  
 under the present ministers, had he not been  
 of the opinion, that, from their weakness,  
 his chance was better in adhering to the  
 former. The confused and bungling execu-  
 tion of this article in the Morning Chro-  
 nicle, arising, probably, from the agitation  
 in the writer’s mind, renders it necessary  
 for us to pass over many of the topics,  
 which he has introduced, or rather lugged  
 in. We will, therefore, leave his represen-  
 tation of the “ *just alarm*,” that has been  
 excited by the supposition that the present  
 ministers have given the king a written  
 pledge not to propose to him that which the  
 late ministers had abandoned the moment  
 they found he was averse from it; we will  
 leave his parade about *oaths*, which compel  
 ministers to *advise* such and such measures,  
 but which do not prevent them from *putting*  
 a stop to such measures, even after they are  
 before parliament, though in such measures  
 are “ involved the interests of a third part of  
 “ the empire, and the preservation of the  
 “ state;” we will leave his affected fears  
 about the tranquillity of Ireland, *the people*  
 of which he chooses to consider as deeply  
 interested in supporting the late ministers,  
 who, for what reasons the people of Ireland  
 will, perhaps, be able to judge, withdrew  
 the bill they had introduced, and which was  
 pretended, at least, to be in their favour;  
 we will leave the distinction between minis-  
 ters who claim a right to advise measures,  
 and who are ready to abandon them at the  
 mere suggestion of the king, and ministers  
 who, before hand, as he asserts, pledge  
 themselves not to advise measures of which  
 the king is known to disapprove; we will  
 leave the *ferment*, which he foresees will  
 arise in Ireland at the dissolution of a parlia-  
 ment, which, after it had before it a bill for

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the good, as it is assumed, of the people of Ireland, suffered that bill to be withdrawn without one single opposing voice: all these we will leave, including the sublime reveries of Lords Grenville and Howick about "conciliating the affections of the people of Ireland, uniting the whole kingdom in one bond of brotherly love, drawing off the superabundant population, and extracting the means of defence from the very bowels of discontent," and that, too, observe, by the enabling of about three or four dozen of Irish catholics, chiefly of the nobility, to become Generals upon the staff, looking upon this as a most rational scheme for rendering happy, and, of course, contented, two or three millions of ragged, half-starved, houseless creatures, not one out of one thousand of whom knows what a General upon the staff means: all these we will leave to produce that impression, which they are so well calculated to produce upon the minds of sensible men, and we will come, at once, to the question of *the right and the expediency of dissolving the parliament, at this time*; after which we may be allowed to indulge ourselves in a few remarks upon the insinuations of this writer respecting *my views* (for he quotes my very words) in *wishing for a dissolution of the parliament*.

That the king has a *right* to dissolve the parliament whenever he pleases, has never been denied by any man, who did not feel an interest in a parliament's continuing undissolved. It is, in fact, the only *constitutional* means which the king has of protecting himself and his authority, of preserving his due weight in the scale, or of preserving to the Lords their due weight, against the encroachments of the House of Commons; for, that assemblies of men are as apt to encroach as individuals, history affords us many and striking proofs. This prerogative is also necessary to the protection of the people, seeing that it is possible for a House of Commons to betray its trust, and, by the means of the power of granting or withholding supplies, to tyrannize over both king and people. It is now, however, contended, that the parliament itself has the right of inquiring, whether this prerogative be justly exercised. We are told by this writer, that it was "given to the king not to enable him to get rid of honest and virtuous councillors, but to protect him against the exuberance of independence," which latter, he tells us, by way of question, is not the vice of parliaments now-a-days; and which assertion I am, Gentlemen, by no means disposed to

deny. But, with regard to his two positions, before-stated, as applied to the present circumstances, I must first observe, that there would be, if we were to admit his principle, a previous question to be discussed, namely, whether the late ministers were "honest and virtuous councillors;" and, I think it about ten to one that the result would not be exactly conformable to the assumption of Mr. James Perry, who enjoyed a pretty good place under those ministers. Than the principle nothing can be more false, nothing more contrary to the constitution of our government, nothing more degrading to both king and parliament, and nothing better calculated to keep alive a constant jealousy and hatred of the former. The true doctrine is, that the parliament has nothing at all to do with the choosing, or the dismissing of the king's ministers, who are called, and who ought to be regarded, as "*his servants*." The true office of the parliament is, to propound, to discuss, to pass laws, and to present them to the king for his approbation or rejection; and, it is the peculiar office of the House of Commons to grant, or refuse, money to the king, for any and for every purpose whatever. In this, and this alone, consists its power as a check upon the other branches; and, in the just and wise exercise of this power consists the only constitutional security that the people have, either for property, liberty, or life. Take away this power, or render it of no use, *no matter by what means*, and all we have, life included, is placed at mere hazard. Such a well-poised government, supported by laws so just and of so long standing, does not, all at once, sink down into an open and merciless tyranny, crushing every man without exception: but, by degrees, and with a motion continually accelerating, down it must come, if this power be once destroyed, or, by whatever means, rendered of no effect. If this doctrine be sound, and I think that no reasonable and disinterested man will deny that it is, what despicable nonsense is this that we hear about the *confidence of parliament* in the king's ministers? A man cannot serve two masters. It is certain, that, the parliament, viewed in the constitutional light as a *check* upon the king, are the very last of all his subjects who ought to be able to interfere in the choice of his servants. If there be a *limit* upon the prerogative; if the exercise of it be subjected to any considerations of expediency, in any body besides the king himself, it is evident that the parliament must be the judge; and, if the parliament are of opinion, that it is inex-



pedient to dissolve them, of course they will not be dissolved. What, then, becomes of the prerogative? But, Gentlemen, the fact is, that people who preach such doctrine as this, wish to make a mere tool of the parliament; a mere mouth-piece wherewith to remonstrate against every measure of the king that may militate against their interests, whether in the way of power or of profit. They never tell us, that the House of Commons, upon seeing the affairs of the nation committed to dishonest or childish men, ought to *refuse money*, 'till they see those affairs in honester or abler hands; these writers never call upon the House to exercise this its constitutional and efficient power. That would not suit their purpose. It is always some dispute about *who shall have power and profit*, in which such men wish to engage the parliament; and it is, to be sure, ridiculous enough to see the whole nation engaged in the same disputes, taking the side of one place-hunting faction, or another, and seeming to think it of no consequence at all who compose the House of Commons, that House, which, as was before observed, forms the only constitutional check upon the exercise of the royal authority!—Mr. Perry does, however, acknowledge, that the prerogative of dissolution *has been exercised before*, an acknowledgement, which, when we reflect on the events of last year, certainly does great credit to his candour. His apology for the dissolution by Pitt, especially when we consider how often he has vehemently reprobated that measure, is really too disgusting to admit of an appropriate comment. "But," says he, "is there *no difference* between *four months and four years*?" Yes, thou sagacious querist, there are just forty-four months difference; but what difference is there in the *principle*? Aware of the paltriness of this subterfuge, he next comes to the *object* of the dissolution. "The late *ministers*," says he, "dissolved at the *end of four sessions complete, and they dissolved at a time when, by the failure of the negotiation, a new æra in the war had begun*." Well, and what then? Why not go on? Why not go on, and tell us *why* a parliament should be dissolved for *that cause*? You have stated your fact, but have left us to make the best use of it we can; and the use I make of it is to say, that, in my opinion, the reason why they dissolved it then, was, that they suspected, that, having failed in making peace, they would not be able to keep a majority in the House of Commons, without an appeal to the *free voice* of the people, which appeal

they made, Gentlemen, in the manner that we witnessed in Westminster and Hampshire. Does Mr. Perry mean to say, that it is necessary to dissolve the parliament as often as the ministry find it expedient to take a new course as to their executive measures? If so, what a degraded thing would he make the parliament; and how far beyond expression degraded things would he make those by whom one branch of that parliament is chosen? One would hope, that he could not mean this; but, upon the supposition that he does, we may surely ask him whether a dissolution should not, upon the same principle, take place *now*, when I venture to assert, that there will be a perfectly "new æra" as to warlike and all other measures. — In short, in the whole of this article, evidently intended, as was before observed, to deter the king from dissolving the parliament, there does not appear to me to be any one reason why that measure should not be adopted, if the king choose. Harm to the country it is *impossible* it should do; it is quite impossible it should do harm; and it may possibly lead, though indirectly, perhaps, to a great deal of good.

The other part of this article of Mr. Perry, to which, Gentlemen, I am anxious to turn your attention is, that where this sage personage quotes my words, and where, doing me the honour to rank me with some others, whom he styles the Agitators of Westminster and Middlesex, he says, in substance, this: "That we wish for a dissolution of parliament, on account of the turbulence, the jubilee suspension of authority that would arise from, and the immoderate licence of debate that would accompany it; that we seek the total overthrow of the government and laws, because we are sure to gain thereby; that we are desperate Jacobins, though he will not make use of an antiquated name; that we are deep cunning fellows, wise in our generation, and well knowing what will tend to the accomplishing of our views; that the poor silly courtiers (and he broadly hints at some pretty high in rank) are doing our work for us; and that it is for the gentlemen of England to step forward, vote for the late ministry against the king and his new ministry, and thus prevent the whole fabric of the English government from being destroyed." — This is pretty well, and particularly from Mr. Perry, who, for so many years past, has been the proprietor of the Morning Chronicle, in which the French revolution was eulogized, and in which all the acts, the

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silliest and bloodiest not excepted, of the French revolutionists were, if not actually defended, apologized for. We must keep our temper. For this, amongst other things, Mr. Perry was made. It is perfectly becoming him and his cause. But, Gentlemen, supposing the world were to believe what he says; supposing it to be believed, that I am in such desperate circumstances, or that the existence of government and law is so repugnant to my nature and my habits, or that I am so totally bereft of the love and esteem of my country, family, and friends, that *any change* would be a benefit to me, and that, as being most consonant to my disposition, I wish to see the destruction of the government effected through the means of degrading the parliament and the ministry; supposing all this, which he insinuates, to be true, what, I ask you, Gentlemen, must be my gratification at reading, for three weeks, the mutual exposures and re-criminations, published in the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Courier*? Nay, why need I go farther than the very article above quoted. Here Mr. Perry describes the men, whom the king has now chosen for his confidential servants, as "adventurers without talent, property, connection, or interest, in the country, advanced to office by the most ridiculous of all intrigues;" as "desperate adventurers without property or consideration, avowedly seeking to be pensioners of the public for bread before they commence their ministerial functions." He says that they mean to gain a majority in parliament "by a traffic in corrupt boroughs; that they shall not be suffered to call a dissolution an appeal to the people; that the right of dissolving parliament was not intended to indulge the personal caprices of the monarch; that all the new ministers can hope for is, by a corrupt influence of government, to obtain a majority in parliament, without the least consideration of their public merits or principles, or rather in defiance of their self-convicted imbecility, and their flagrant subserviency."—Every one has his characteristic manner of doing a thing, and this is Mr. Perry's way of supporting "government and social order" against us Jacobins and Levellers! In other of his papers he has been much more vehement in this sort of opposition to us. There is scarcely a term or an epithet expressive of his contempt, or of villainy in them, which he has not applied to the members of the new cabinet, to "his Majesty's confidential servants!" He has ascribed to them bad qualities of all sorts, to each in the highest degree; insomuch that, if the world were to

believe his statements, they must regard these "confidential servants of the king" as a set of wretches unfit to be trusted with the management of the most trifling individual concern, especially where honesty was required, whence the inference as to the master who has chosen them is inevitable. Yet, Gentlemen, this is the man who represents us as Jacobins and Levellers, and who has taken upon him the task of defending the "monarchy of England" against our crafty and wicked machinations!—The truth is, that he and his party well know, that they have nothing more to expect from the independent part of the people; they know, that the very weakest amongst them will never trust or believe them again. They may as well abuse us as not; for hate them we do, and hate them we shall. The deeds of the last six weeks of their power will never be forgotten by me; and, I hope, they never will be forgotten by you. They gained our good wishes and our confidence by their apparently sincere condemnation of the measures and the principles of Pitt; the very first vote they gave after their elevation was to oblige us to pay the debts of that very same man. From that day, until the day when their power was destroyed, they praised his measures, praised his character, and pursued his example. With what face can they now stand up to condemn the principles of his professed followers? Except, indeed, they condemn them for not acting contrary to their professions, which, in them, would be natural enough. Lord Melville, they tell us, is at the bottom of all this intrigue; and they throw out most significant hints about the indecency of consulting Lord Melville. You and I, Gentlemen, might consistently enough throw out such hints; but, for them, who volunteered with a *bill of indemnity* for Pitt's lending the 40 thousand pounds of the public money to Boyd and Benfield (two members of parliament), without interest and without the knowledge of his colleagues, and even without making any minute of the transaction, leaving the fact to be detected by a board of inquiry; for them, who well-knew, who had evidence before them, that Pitt was duly acquainted with all that Lord Melville did in the concerns alluded to, and that he never expressed his disapprobation of it; for them, who saw Pitt contend, in all manner of ways, that Lord Melville's conduct was justifiable; for them, who have since so eulogized that same Pitt, and who, even during the trial of Lord Melville, eulogized him to the skies; for them to complain of the "indecency" of Lord Melville's being again



employed in public affairs is an instance of inconsistency too shameful, one would have thought, even for Mr. Perry to become the promulgator. They had their motive for eulogizing Pitt, for cherishing his under adherents, and for turning their backs upon those who had aided and supported them in their warfare against him; but, it was a motive of short-sighted ambition. Thirteen months of power they have purchased with political annihilation. They will, in a few weeks, find themselves without a single adherent; from the *very highest* to the very lowest, of those who were formerly attached to them, they will scarcely find a man, who does not, in his heart, rejoice at their fall; and, as to the independent part of the people, not one man of them will ever again be deceived by their professions or their clamours. They may call together their *Whig-Club*; they may send forth their puffs about *Francis Horner* and the rest of the new recruits of Whiggism; but, this old rump of a Club will, from this day to the day of its final extinction, be an object of contempt, a by-word and a reproach.

Of the *remedy* for all these things, of the means of protection against imposture and oppression, I shall, Gentlemen, speak in my next, and, in the mean while I remain,

Your faithful friend,

And obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

Botley, 9th April, 1807.

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE.

TO THE RIGHT HON. W. WINDHAM.

#### LETTER III.

SIR,—Agreeably to my promise, I now proceed to examine in what degree your military system has found support, from “the eloquent speech of General Sir John Doyle,” delivered in the House of Commons on the 23d of January, of which, as it had, “excited much interest,” an “accurate report of it” is given in the *Courier* newspaper of the 27th of the same month.—“I lay it down,” says the General with all due solemnity, “as a proposition as incontrovertible as any theorem in Euclid, that, whatever weapon the enemy assails you with, he must be met with one of *equal efficiency*. If the enemy were to invade you with the trained bands of Paris, I should be content to meet him with the trained bands of London. But, as he will come (if he can) with a *regular disciplined army*, he must, therefore, be met by a *regular disciplined army*.” Now, Sir, that “a regular disciplined army” of

any given number of soldiers, is more “efficient” than an equal number of soldiers either ill disciplined or not disciplined at all, we need not an experienced general, however eloquent, to inform us. In this view of the military Baronet’s proposition, and this is all I can find in it that is to the point, we shall readily allow it to be “as incontrovertible as any theorem in Euclid.” But, Sir, when we view the question of national defence; and this the General makes the ground of his argument; his “proposition” taking it to express “a regular disciplined army” as his *means*, is so far from “incontrovertible” that I utterly deny it; and not only deny it, but protest against it as the most fatal that can possibly be adopted. Let me remind the General that the Emperor of Germany at Marengo had “a regular disciplined army;” the coalesced sovereigns at Austerlitz had two “regular disciplined armies,” furnished by two potent empires; and the descendant of the Great Frederick of Prussia, again at Auerstadt had “a regular disciplined army;” and yet, all these were successively defeated by that of Napoleon, the German empire was overturned, and the King of Prussia met with his “downfall.” On all these defeats in the teeth of his “incontrovertible proposition,” our mathematical General is perfectly silent. and while he exerts all his eloquence, while he displays all his wit and humour, and likewise quotes Horace, while he conjures the House to “unanimity, till the great object of national security be perfect and complete,” in order that our country may “employ all its energies to *keep out* the arch enemy of all legitimate government,” and tells that “the existence of all we hold dear is at stake; property, LIBERTY, and life;” while I say he thus exerts himself to recommend the adoption of “a regular disciplined army” as our only security against Napoleon, he wholly forgets to remind us of one circumstance, which is of some account in the question, namely, that as soon as Napoleon got at the head of the “regular disciplined army” of France, THERE WAS AN END OF FRENCH LIBERTY, and that by means of this very instrument he not only rules France with a rod of iron, but is the scourge of Europe!!! Now, setting this “incontrovertible proposition” against that of the learned General, we are left yet to seek a “perfect and complete” system of national defence. I find it only in the military energies of the English constitution. There also it was found by the God-like Jones, whom Johnson esteemed “the most enlightened of the sons of men;”



and there in like manner it was found by the late Duke of Richmond, a general, an engineer, and a constitutional statesman. In the last edition of England's *Ægis*, I have endeavoured to do justice to the great merit of the Duke's Thoughts on the National Defence; while I accounted, as I conceive, for the too-limited plan he proposed, on the grounds that any scheme on the grand scale of the constitution would have been far too "perfect and complete" for the selfish, factious, politics of the ministers of that day, to the scale of whose patriotism the Duke seems to have flattered himself he had contracted the scale of his National Defence, but, as it turned out, although the force he proposed to be put in action was less than half what the constitution enjoins, it was more—being *constitutional*, than they chose to employ.—Now, Sir, a word or two if you please upon that great military mystery, *discipline*. While the artful priests of the doctrine would have us believe there is no salvation but in a standing army, we shall not do amiss if we consult a little our common sense. All military superiority is in degrees. A thousand men with a small degree of discipline are superior to a thousand without any discipline at all. And a thousand of course who are highly disciplined will be superior to an equal number who are only half disciplined. Hence it follows, that superiority will ever be in a ratio compounded of comparative numbers with comparative discipline; so that the use of *discipline* is, that it may become a *SUBSTITUTE* for *physical force*; or it may be called the art whereby any proposed degree of military energy shall be concentrated within the narrowest space, that is, within the smallest number of men; and a very convenient art it is. But to go a little farther into the mystery, I shall not scruple to hold very cheap, a great deal of that trash which contributes so much to the smartness of a parade, and on which officers lay a stress, in proportion to their incapacity for distinguishing what is essential, and for comprehending the sublimer parts of the military science. In these sentiments I find myself confirmed by the experienced officer whose speech we are considering.—What are the essentials which a soldier is to be taught? Steadiness; arms-wielding; tactics; and a strong sense of military and national honour. By arms-wielding, I mean the familiar use of his arms with complete safety to his comrades and all possible danger to his enemy; and by tactics, I mean his preserving his right place, rank and file, in all the necessary varieties in the form, and all the proper evolutions, of his battalion or

company while changing its position or its place, so that the commander may never be disappointed in the military effect upon his enemy he has the capacity to conceive, and the energy to execute. The intelligent officer who can separate trifles from essentials; who is master of the principles of conducting a military body from any one point to any other, either by times of the shortest distance, or in spaces of the shortest time, and whose bosom glows with the fire of the soldier and of the patriot, would soon shew the means of imparting to an English population in arms, all necessary discipline for rendering its physical force truly resistless, even by that "regular disciplined army" which has conquered so many other "regular armies!" "A great deal of unnecessary instruction and inappropriate discipline," says Sir John Doyle, "was, at the outset, attempted to be communicated to them. [the Volunteers]. It did happen to me in America to meet with a circumstance from which I derived much useful information on this head. About 150 recruits were sent out to the regiment of which I was adjutant: I immediately proceeded to have them taught, *secundum artem*, eyes to the right, toes out, &c. But I was interrupted in my course by the Major, who was a very sensible intelligent man, and who told me, that *I began at the wrong end*. I accordingly changed my course, and taught my men to manage the firelock. This was the Major's advice, who thought it most necessary, particularly when time pressed, that the men *should learn to fire at the enemy*, and this proved to be wise, for in three weeks after they arrived these recruits had to meet the enemy." This, Sir, you will observe, was in "a regular disciplined army."—I have remarked that *discipline* at best is only a *SUBSTITUTE* for *physical force*. But, if it be true, that in a militia, or armed population, you may have *BOTH*, then what becomes of the General's "incontrovertible proposition?" And what is to hinder your having both? We know by experience that the perfection of arms-wielding and tactics is as attainable in a regiment of militia, as of the line. And every man who pleases to inform himself may know, that if the largest "regular disciplined army" the nation can find funds to pay, were to be opposed to the people of England in arms, having received such discipline as is easily practicable, that army could not stand before them a moment. Why then is such an army to be preferred for defending us against invasion? The rank and file of that army must ever be composed



of that part of the population who are least interested in the defence of property, as having themselves none, and being hirelings at wages of a few pence per day. To such men as our defenders, we must prefer those who should include in their numbers the possessors of all the property in the kingdom, together with a selection of their relatives and most trusty dependents. Recollecting, Sir, that wherever an unbalanced standing army has taken root, *there liberty has perished*. I shall close this letter with repeating what, eight years ago, I said of the military system of the constitution: “On the true principles of order, the very bond of all society, and by a beautiful, refined, yet simple mechanism, it organizes a community of free citizens into an invincible army; it communicates the sensibilities of the individual to the aggregate of society, and causes those energies, for resisting menace and repelling assault, which characterise a brave man, to adorn and to dignify a great nation. And it is a system which, although regulated with mechanic precision, has yet its sure foundations in the human heart; and, co-extensive with society itself, it has a solid reliance on its own resistless force. The soldier it forms is equally impelled by law, by reason, and by patriotism, to fly to his standard on the first sound of danger. By his dearest interests and his honour, he is prompted to a faithful discharge of his duty; and by all the objects of his tenderest attachment, and by the noblest feelings of his soul, he is inspired with that enthusiasm which renders the free man, defending the liberties of his country, ever terrible in the day of battle. In fine, the military system here spoken of, is a system of which equal liberty is the inspiring soul, and general liberty the happy result. May the intrinsic wisdom of this system—the noblest legacy of an English King—of kings the greatest that ere bore earthly rule; once more give life and energy to England, that her liberties and her glory may be immortal!”—In my next, Sir, I propose to reply to your friend B. Meanwhile I have the honour to remain, with much respect, Sir, your most obedient humble servant, —JOHN CARTWRIGHT.—Feb. 26, 1807.

“*LEARNED LANGUAGES.*”

No. 19.

SIR,—The indispensable, and, I must say, more important concerns of my present situation have prevented me, hitherto, from realizing the intentions, which I for some

time have had of communicating a few observations to you respecting the “*Learned Languages.*” The subject, as it was natural to have supposed, has procured you many correspondents; most of whose productions, as far as I have had time to look at them, [I say it by no means to extol my own] are characterised by pedantic gibberish, or by prolix and sophistical argumentation. Had I time or room, many glaring absurdities, much false logic, might be pointed out, and successfully retorted upon the respective authors. Without making any animadversions, however, on your many publications regarding this subject, which I must confess I have not had patience fully to examine, I shall submit to you, and, if you think proper, to the public, a few desultory hints tending to prove, if not the sophistical fallacy, at least the unqualified and unphilosophical comprehensiveness of your boasted proposition, that “the dead languages are improperly called *learned*, and as a part of general education are *worse than useless.*” —In the first place, your conception of the “impropriety” of the epithet “*learned*,” as applied to the dead languages, depends entirely upon an unjustifiable, and unnoticed innovation which you have very improperly made in the acceptation of that word. You have restricted the meaning of it to a *knowledge only of facts*; and do not allow it to comprehend, as it properly does, a *knowledge also of literature*. Had you attended to its etymology, [but your proposition virtually condemns all etymology] which, in cases of this kind, every “*learned*” person would [if he could] have recourse to, you would have found that, if there is to be any preference, *learning* is more properly a knowledge of literature or languages than of facts. We have *learn leopman* which is the Saxon for a letter: or take it *learned—lettered—litera*; for it was a necessity in the days of antiquity, as it is yet, although certainly in a less degree, that, before a man was *learned* in facts, he must be *learned* in *letters*. The men possessed of general knowledge, or the “*learned*” men were, in the days of antiquity, and still are called *literati*. Had you consulted Johnson’s Dictionary, or read the third book of Mr. Locke’s Essay, you would not have couched your fundamental proposition in such indefinite and undefined terms. But such are, and similar will be the effects of “*learning.*” In the second place, admitting that learning may signify the knowledge of facts, or the “possession of ideas,” it is as erroneous, according to my way of thinking, to say that a linguist in ancient literature, and consequently,



the languages he is master of, are “improperly called learned,” as it is to say that a mathematician is improperly called skilful, or learned, which with Dr. Johnson are perfectly synonymous; the latter expresses his ideas in the symbols of Algebra, or the characters of Arithmetic, and the former does it in the character and words of different languages.—I must again take notice of the equivocation and uncertainty of your grand proposition. It would seem, that you mean either to confound and mislead your antagonists by forcing them into [what “learning” seems to know nothing about] an *ignoratio elenchi*, so called by logicians; or, to secure yourself [as the sophists used to do] behind the uncertainty and rhetorical aberrations of your language. The clause of your proposition “as a part of *general education*” is very dubious. For this may either mean as a part of what is commonly called a *liberal education*; or as a part of education in *general*; that is, of education as administered in different degrees to different individuals. Taking your proposition in either of these senses, I think it highly objectionable and dangerous, particularly in the *first sense*.—As Lord Chesterfield said to his son, we must learn Greek and Latin *because they are learned*. We must make ourselves acquainted with the dead languages, that we may not be put out of countenance by every petulant boy, every pedantic schoolmaster that we meet with: the bragadocio dares not challenge that person who he knows can fight: and the bigoted ecclesiastic when he finds himself hard pushed in any dispute, immediately throws off his antagonist, and leaves him at fault amidst the unsearchable windings of the scriptural labyrinth. Thus, since custom has sanctioned it, the learned languages must be studied. This you’ll perhaps say is no argument: to study the learned languages, because they are studied, is only aggravating the evil, and making the period more distant, when it may be hoped it will be eradicated. But, Mr. Cobbett, are not our British classics mottoed and interspersed with passages from the ancient writers, *which, it would be very congruous no doubt, to see a “learned” man unable to read, far less to understand?* Are not the nomenclatures of all our arts and sciences made up of Greek and Latin phrases and words, *which a “learned” man’s acuteness may enable him well enough to dispense with?* Do not the technical terms of the most common trades consist if not altogether of *learned words*, at least of such the proper understanding of which depends upon a knowledge of their roots; *the knowledge of*

*which are worse than useless to the apothecary or the florist?* And, in the course of a “learned” man’s speaking and writing, do not many passages occur which might be far more expressively, and accurately conveyed by a *single learned word* than by the tediousness and obscurity of vernacular periphrases?!!!—To be more serious, I make no hesitation in saying that, were your doctrine received, every prodigal esquire, every improving farmer, every cash-thirsty divine, every speculative merchant, every luxurious magistrate, would slight the education of his children: he would say to himself, why need I throw away my money in teaching my sons Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, *which Mr. Cobbett, whose authority is unexceptionable, says, are “worse than useless.”* I will put them to writing and arithmetic; and, if they chuse to be “learned,” let them read the ancient classics, and study history, which have been both copiously translated into our own tongue. Depend upon it, this would be the case more or less, according to the different tempers of individuals: and the inhabitants of Britain, with a few exceptions, would fall from that high rank which they have long held, and which they still maintain in the European scale of classical literature, and would degenerate into pitiful creatures, fit only to scrawl at desks, to keep shops, or to fill the places of ignorant and miserable peasants.—There is nothing which cultivates the mind more than the mere study of the learned languages [supposing them to be not even directly useful, which, by the by, can be possible in very few cases.] By studying these, the memory is strengthened, the judgment is exercised, and the taste is cultivated. The grammar of our own tongue can never be sufficiently understood *till we are acquainted with universal grammar*. Now, it is as impossible to derive a knowledge of universal grammar from the modern languages, as it is to understand the *principia* of Newton without the elements of geometry. Universal grammar comprehends the construction of all languages both ancient and modern; and, without a knowledge of the former whose construction is so peculiar, and which are the foundation of universal grammar, its beauty cannot be perceived, nor its generality understood.—The languages are the channels by which information is conveyed from one man, from one nation, and from one age to another. A truly learned man, to carry on the metaphor, must be able to swim down those channels whose streams are quiet and limped from the smoothness which the long running of the water has produced; as well as to be carried



down a rough and hoarse-sounding current, which has *newly* broke out, and which rolls in torrents amid the *rocks* over which it runs. He must, having felt the smoothness of the old-run channels, clear away the sand, and gravel, and hew down the protuberances of the rocks of the new channels, which unpolished, render their waters rough and disagreeable; and must have it in his power to drink from *the old fountains*, in order to quench *that thirst* which the waters of the *new* are unable to remove. To speak plainly, he must be able to consult the ancient languages for those numerous and most valuable branches of *knowledge*, which are *there* only to be found; and, he must, by imitating the style and spirit of the ancient classics, which are the archetypes of all the elegance and taste of modern composition, endeavour to acquire that purity of diction, and taste of fine writing, for which we admire the Greeks and Romans. If this man attempts to make those acquirements *by imitating our modern classics only*, he places himself in a predicament exactly similar to that of a portrait-painter who copies from an old picture instead of drawing from the life.

—Of the various and numerous arguments which I might adduce, I shall only give you another, which I consider more cogent, and unanswerable than any which I have stated. For wise ends, it has pleased the Omnipotent Creator to “confound men’s language, “that they may not understand one another’s speech:” but his kind Providence has provided, as he has done similarly in most other cases, a remedy for this “confusion” in the very confusion itself. It is admirably ordered that *the more modern are derived from the more ancient languages*; and, it is more than probable, that, were we able to follow the etymology, they might all be traced up to the same common origin.—

Hence, what are called the learned languages, are in a great measure the roots of the modern European tongues. By making ourselves masters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, we therefore, purchase, or rather acquire *gratuitously*, the essence [so to express it] of our comparatively modern *jargons*; or, while we make ourselves adepts in the ancient languages, we, *at the same time*, become masters in a great measure of all that are derived from them. A person *skilled in the ancient languages*, when he wishes to learn those spoken now, has only to get a few vocables and idioms, and his work is accomplished. The superiority of boys from only the Latin school, over girls, who are not so educated, in studying French, Italian, or Spanish is universally known. How pre-

posterous is it, therefore, to neglect the study of the learned languages, and to bestow those pains in acquiring one of the modern jargons which would at once have introduced us to all the beauties of ancient literature; and have put us in possession of a key to most of the modern languages. How preposterous and fallacious I must also say, till I see your *not-to-be-answered* arguments, is that proposition that “the dead languages are improperly called learned, and as a part of “general education are *worse than useless.*”

—To cover the rear of my reasonings, I shall terminate them, and this letter [the length of which I hope you will excuse] with a quotation from the writings of the late very learned and sagacious Mr. Dalzel, the bare authority of whose name might have precluded the necessity of any argument. Speaking of the learned languages, he elegantly observes, “*quibus apud nos deficientibus cito deficiet omnes doctrina polior, iisdem vigentibus, omnes etiam artes quæ ad humanitatem pertinent una vigeant.*”

—I am, Sir, your respectful and benevolent reader and correspondent,—J. B.—SCOTO BRITANNUS.

P. S. This letter I submit to your candid perusal and disposal. I must most earnestly and respectfully beg that you will excuse any too great freedoms, into which I may have been intruded by the very lively sense which I have of the danger which your doctrines on this subject threaten to the safety of Britain, and to the general welfare of modern literature. —*Mud Lothian, April 5.*

#### “*LEARNED LANGUAGES.*”

No. 20.

SIR,—If I have no other merit, I shall have at least that of brevity. I do not mean to enter the lists, but merely to correct the mis-statement of a very smart correspondent in your number of the 28th of March, who subscribes himself Attalus: a correction I grant you of little influence on the result. He states three of the greatest writers of modern Italy, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace, to have been totally unacquainted with Greek, and so little with Latin, that in its practical influence it amounted to nothing. I learn, however, from the last volume of Gibbon’s History, that Boccace was taught Greek by Leontius Pilatus, and attained in it such proficiency as to execute a prose translation of the Iliad and Odyssey. And with respect to their Latin acquisitions, let works bear witness: all the three wrote much in that language; the two last more than an ordinary reader could master in half a life time.

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Nay, to the extent of their intimacy with the classics, and the spirit of imitation it engendered, Hume ascribes their want of native simplicity. Even Dante, the least scholastic of the three, as we learn from Boccace, was most familiar with Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Statius, and the other celebrated poets, and, not satisfied with perusing, endeavoured to imitate them, ("famigliarissimo divenne di Vergilio, di Orazio, di Ovidio, di Stazio e di ciascuno altro poeta famoso, non solamente avendo caro il conoscergli, ma ancora s'ingegno d'imitarli"); was equally familiar with the Roman historians and philosophers; and long hesitated between writing his celebrated poem in Latin or Italian, having actually once begun it in Latin, of which Boccace gives a specimen. (See *Vita e Costume di Dante del Boccaccio*)—Attalus asserts that their knowledge of the classics must have been very imperfect, because Livy, Sallust, and part of Cicero were then unrecovered. I confess my information on this subject is very defective; but I shrewdly suspect that of Attalus, notwithstanding his reference to the Abbé de Sade, (which seems to be of a piece with that of my friend Anacharsis to Locke) to be equally if not more defective. For I can place as much reliance on Gibbon as on Attalus, and he tells me, "that, in the familiar society of Cicero and Livy, Petrarch had imbibed the ideas of an ancient Patriot;" and speaking of Petrarch's friend Rienzi, he says, "The study of history and eloquence, the writings of Cicero, Seneca, Livy, Cæsar, and Valerius Maximus elevated above his equals and contemporaries the genius of the young Plebeian." And, I believe, the Abbé de Sade informs us, that more of Cicero was perused by Petrarch, than has come down to us, consequently by his friend and contemporary Boccace. Both Gibbon and Attalus cite the Abbé de Sade; and there appears to be this small difference between them, that Gibbon actually read this author, and Attalus has heard of him. In no other manner can I account for so many blunders in so few words. If I have paid 1s. for the postage of this communication, I am notwithstanding, sensible enough of its unimportance; and it would be cruel to tell me that fools and their money are soon parted.—G. N.—*Leith, April 4, 1787.*

#### FOREIGN OFFICIAL PAPERS.

CONTINENTAL WAR.—*Thirty-third Bulletin of the Grand French Army.*

Berlin, Nov. 17, 1806.—The annexed suspension of arms was signed yesterday, at Charlottenburgh. The season is rather ad-

vanced. This suspension of arms settles the quarters of the army. Part of Prussian Poland is thus occupied by the French army, and part of it is neuter.—His Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and his Majesty the King of Prussia, in consequence of negotiations opened, since the 23d of October last, for the re-establishment of the peace so unhappily interrupted between them, have judged necessary to agree upon a suspension of arms; and, for this purpose, they have appointed for their plenipotentiaries, to wit, his Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, the General of Division, Michel Duroc, Grand Insignia of the Legion of Honour, Knight of the Orders of the Black Eagle and Red Eagle of Prussia, and of Fidelity of Baden, and Grand Marshal of the Imperial Palace: and his Majesty the King of Prussia, the Marquis of Lucchesini, his Minister of State, Chamberlain and Knight of the Orders of the Black Eagle and Red Eagle of Prussia, and General Frederic William de Zastrow, Chief of the Regiment and Inspector General of Infantry and Knight of the Orders of the Red Eagle and of Merit; who, after having exchanged their full powers, have agreed upon the following articles:—Art. I. The troops of his Majesty the King of Prussia, who are at present upon the right bank of the Vistula, shall assemble at Königsberg and in Royal Prussia from the right bank of the Vistula.—II. The troops of his Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, shall occupy the part of Southern Prussia which is on the right bank of the Vistula as far as the mouth of Bug, Thorn, the fortress and town of Graudenz, the town and citadel of Dantzic, the towns of Colberg and Lenczyc, which shall be delivered to them for security; and in Silesia, the towns of Glogau and Breslau with the portion of that province which is on the right bank of the Oder, and the part of that situated on the left bank of the same river, which will have for limit a line bordering upon that river, five leagues above Breslau, passing through Ohlau, Tobson, three leagues behind Schweidnitz, and without comprising it, and from thence to Freyburg, Landshut, and joining Bohemia to Lieban.—III. The other parts of Eastern Prussia or New Eastern Prussia, shall not be occupied by any of the armies, either French, Prussian or Russian, and if the Russian troops are there, his Majesty the King of Prussia engages to make them fall back to their own territory; as also not to receive any troops of that power into his states, during the time of the suspension of arms.—IV. The fortresses of Hameln and Nienberg, as well as those



mentioned in Article II. shall be delivered up to the French troops, with their arms and stores, of which an inventory shall be made out within a week after the exchange of the ratifications of the present suspension of arms. The garrisons of these fortresses shall not be made prisoners of war; they shall be allowed to march to Königsberg, and they shall be allowed the necessary facilities for that purpose.—V. The negotiations shall be continued at Charlottenburg, and should peace not follow, the two high contracting parties engage not to resume hostilities until having reciprocally given notice to each other ten days beforehand.—VI. The present suspension of arms shall be ratified by the two high contracting parties, and the exchange of ratifications shall take place at Graudentz, at farthest by the 21st of the present month.—In faith of which, the undersigned plenipotentiaries have signed the present, and have set to it their respective seals.—Given at Charlottenburg, Nov. 16, 1806. (Signed) DUROC, LUCCHESINI, ZASTROW.

*Thirty-fourth Bulletin of the Grand French Army.*

Berlin, Nov. 23.—We have as yet no advices that the armistice concluded on the 17th inst. has been ratified by the King of Prussia, or that any exchange of the ratification has yet taken place. Mean time hostilities continue, nor will any suspension of them take place until the exchange of the ratification.—General Savary, to whom the Emperor had entrusted the siege of Hameln, had, on the 20th instant, a conference with the Prussian generals belonging to the garrison, and has made them sign a capitulation. Nine thousand prisoners, amongst whom are six generals, magazines for 10,000 men, with six months provisions, and all kinds of military stores, a company of flying artillery, and 300 cavalry, have fallen into our hands.—The only troops which General Savary had, consisted of a regiment of light infantry, and two Dutch regiments under General Dumonceau.—General Savary has this instant set off for Nienburg, in order to force that place to a capitulation. Its garrison is calculated at between 2 and 3000 men. A battalion of Prussians, 800 strong, who formed the garrison of Caentoschow, on the frontiers of Polish Prussia, capitulated, on the 18th, to 150 chasseurs of the 2d regiment, united with 300 Poles, who had taken up arms and advanced to that place. This garrison are prisoners of war, and the place contains large magazines.

*Thirty-fifth Bulletin of the Grand French Army.*

Posen, Nov. 28, 1806.—The Emperor left Berlin at 2 in the afternoon of the 25th, and arrived at Custrin on the same evening about six. On the 26th, he was at Mezeritz; and on the 27th, at 10 at night, he arrived at Posen. The next day his Majesty gave audience to the various states of the Poles—Marshal Duroc continued his journey to Osterode, where he found the King of Prussia, who declared to him, 'that a part of his states were in the possession of the Russians; that he was dependent upon them; consequently he could not ratify the armistice which had been concluded by his envoy, because it was not in his power to fulfil the stipulated conditions.'—The Grand Duke of Berg, with a part of the cavalry of the reserve, and the corps under Marshals Davoust, Lasnes, and Augereau, have entered Warsaw. The Russian General Benningsen, who occupied the place before the French arrived, evacuated it on hearing of the approach of the French, and that they intended to give him battle.—Prince Jerome, with a corps of Bavarians, is at Kalitsch. All the rest of the army had arrived at Posen.—The surrender of Hameln was marked by some particular circumstances.—Besides the garrison, it seems that after the battle of the 14th, some Prussian battalions had taken refuge there. Disorder reigned among this numerous garrison. The officers were exasperated against the generals, and the soldiers against the officers. Scarcely was the capitulation signed, when General Savary received a letter from the Commandant, General Van Scholer, which he very properly answered. In the mean while the garrison was in a state of insurrection, and the first act of the mutineers was to break open the magazines where the brandy was deposited, and with which they were soon intoxicated. In consequence of this situation, the soon began to fire upon each other in the streets—soldiers, citizens, and officers, pell-mell, altogether. Disorder was at its height. General Van Scholer sent courier after courier to General Savary, to request him to take possession of the place, even before the appointed time. To this the general consented; advanced, and entered the place through a shower of bullets. He drove all the soldiers of the garrison through one of the gates into a neighbouring meadow, where he assembled the officers, and gave them to understand that this behaviour was owing to their relaxed discipline.